NATION

Names of 6 soldiers killed during Op Sindoor revealed

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Apple hikes MacBook, iPad prices by up to 42%

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Ecuador advance to knockout rounds, beat Germany 2-1

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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NCERT adds SIR to Class 9 textbooks

Lauds ECI for 'impartial' role in the exercise

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is now part of the NCERT's Class 9 Social Science textbook.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbook also lauds the Election Commission of India (ECI) for conducting impartial polls despite challenges such as fake news, misinformation and "intimidation".

It describes the SIR as an exercise to ensure that no eligible citizen is left out of the voter list and no ineligible person is included.

The SIR has so far led to the deletion of nearly 6 crore names, with the Opposition alleging that the BJP-led Centre was using it to disenfranchise minority communities.

"This exercise ensures the addition of all voters, especially the young voters who have just turned 18 and may be left out due to a lack of awareness of any other reason," reads a section of the textbook titled 'Understanding Society: India and Beyond'.

The new Class 9 NCERT textbook 'Understanding Society: India and Beyond' describes the Election Commission as 'impartial' —*x*

It says that SIR also deletes names based on death of the voter, change of residence, duplicate enrolment and being permanently untraceable.

A new NCERT Social Science textbook also has included a verse from the controversial Manusmriti to claim that women were accorded respect in the Vedic period but their status "declined" as conditions changed over time.

The reference appears in the chapter, 'State and Society up to 1000 CE', which describes the Vedic age as "often described as a period during which women held a high and respectful position in society."

The textbook also revisits the concepts of 'varna' and 'jati,' arguing that social identity in early Vedic society was not determined solely by birth. "Instead, it is generally agreed that (it) was shaped by several complex and overlapping factors... especially cultural relationships". —*PTI*

SIR COMPLETES ONE YEAR: NEARLY 6 CRORE NAMES DELETED

The Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, which has so far led to the deletion of nearly six crore voters, has completed one year as the poll roll cleanup exercise continues in 19 states and Union Territories. Opposition and activists allege that the poll authority is working at the behest of the BJP to disenfranchise citizens for want of documents.

Pilot SIR started in Bihar last **24 June**

Nearly **65 lakh** names were deleted

In **March 26,** the Supreme Court upheld EC's right to do SIR.

- **CONSEQUENCES OF SIR:** People whose names were deleted are excluded from state welfare benefits in West Bengal and Bihar.
- In 2nd phase of SIR, announced on 27 October, voter list was pruned by 10.2% in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Goa.
- Third phase of the SIR in 16 states and 3 UTs -- Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Telangana, and Uttarakhand, National Capital Territory of Delhi, Chandigarh, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu -- involving 36.73 crore voters was rolled out on 14 May and will conclude this year.

66.88 lakh deceased electors were removed.

63.16 lakh names were deleted following objections and adjudication.

Bengaluru Metro labourer killed on duty

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

A contract labourer engaged in Namma Metro pillar lighting work died of electrocution after allegedly coming into contact with an electric source during earth pit excavation near Trinity Metro Station on Friday. The accident occurred around 3.52 pm near Pillar No. 153 outside the station. According to the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), the worker, employed by contractor M R Electricals, suffered an electric shock during excavation work and was rushed to St Philomena's Hospital. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival. BMRCL said the exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained and an investigation is underway. The corporation expressed condolences to the bereaved family. —*PTI*

No foreign interference in B'desh: Xi to PM

BEIJING, 26 JUNE

Chinese President Xi Jinping has expressed strong backing for Bangladesh's sovereignty and rejected foreign interference during talks with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, who wrapped up his five-day visit to China. Xi affirmed that China supports Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, stating, "China supports Bangladesh in upholding national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and rejecting foreign interference." He proposed establishing an economic corridor linking Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China to enhance regional connectivity. Rahman, held meetings with officials including Premier Li Qiang, signing 13 MoUs covering trade, investment, and education. They discussed cooperation on the Teesta river and Bangladesh sought China's aid in port upgrading. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 6

B'LURU MARKS MUHARRAM

To mark Ashura, the last day of the holy month of Muharram, Shiite Muslims took out a massive religious procession at Johnson Market, on Hosur Road, Bengaluru, on Friday. For Shia Muslims, Muharamm is a period of mourning, marking the holy battle between Hussein and the Caliphate *MOHAMMED ASAD*

Ram Temple Trust head quits after 8 held in 'donation scam'

AYODHYA, 26 JUNE

General secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, Champat Rai and trustee Anil Mishra have resigned, amid allegations of embezzlement of donations received by the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Rai stepped down on moral grounds.

Eight people, arrested as part of the Uttar Pradesh government-ordered probe into the matter, have been remanded to police custody by a court until 29 June for questioning. They were all associated with keeping track of the cash and valuables received as donations at the temple, with five or six being bank employees.

Prosecution Officer KC Verma said investigators have so far recovered Rs 79.85 lakh during the probe, and that provisions relating to criminal breach of trust by public servants and the Prevention of Corruption Act had been invoked.

Anil Mishra and Champat Rai quit as members of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, on Friday —*PTI*

Meanwhile Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said police action against people accused embezzling donations at Ram Temple in Ayodhya began immediately after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed for the investigation submitted its report.

Anyone found guilty would not be spared, he added.

Adityanath however also alleged that political parties opposed to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the construction of the Ram temple were attempting to malign Ayodhya and the Ram temple without evidence.

This comes after former Samajwadi Party Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pawan Pandey claimed that around Rs 7.5 crore in donations had been misappropriated. —*Salar News*

>>>*More on Page 3*

India signs US Pax Silica Summit AI statement

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

India was among 35 countries that joined a US-led initiative to build trusted and resilient supply chains for artificial intelligence (AI) technologies at the second Pax Silica Summit in Washington on Thursday.

The participating nations signed the Joint Statement on AI Opportunity, endorsing a pro-growth, pro-innovation regulatory approach for the AI era. US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg said the initiative reflects a commitment to trusted supply chains, private-sector mobilisation and infrastructure t.

New signatories included Argentina, Germany, the Netherlands, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Kazakhstan, Panama and the EU. India was represented by Electronics and IT Secretary S Krishnan, Additional Secretary (Americas) Nagraj Naidu.

"The future of AI will not be determined by who regulates first, but by who builds first and builds the most capacity," Helberg said. —*PTI*

DKS orders excise officials to behave, cites tax targets

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday warned Excise Department officials against any action that could tarnish the government's image, cautioning that legal provisions could be introduced to transfer officials to other departments if necessary. Reviewing the department's performance at Vidhana Soudha, he said the government would not tolerate any conduct that brought disrepute and urged officials to function with professionalism and dignity.

Referring to the newly implemented Alcohol in Beverage (AIB) system, Shivakumar said it had delivered the expected growth. He announced that 574 new licences would be offered through e-auction and directed officials to allow licence renewal fees to be paid in two instalments. Drawing from reviews of neighbouring states' excise departments, he asked officials to meet revenue targets while maintaining integrity.

At a separate review meeting of the Commercial Taxes Department, Shivakumar welcomed Karnataka achieving the country's second-highest GST growth at 9 per cent, ahead of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Haryana, expressing confidence of surpassing this year's revenue targets.

He directed officials to prevent tax evasion by ensuring goods vehicles carried proper documentation, strengthening coordination with neighbouring states and enforcement agencies, and taking strict action against tax fraud without troubling honest taxpayers. Highlighting fake invoices and fraudulent Input Tax Credit claims as major challenges, he said the state had recovered Rs 166 crore by detecting bogus companies. —*PTI*

Iran-US set up Hormuz hotline after strikes on ships

TEHRAN, 26 JUNE

Iran and the US have established a communication line between them prevent untoward incidents, according to state-run Press TV on Friday.

Iran stressed that any transit through the Strait must take place along routes announced by the Islamic Republic and not any parallel routes that doesn't take Tehran's role as a coastal state into account, something that the US and Gulf states have denied.

This comes as US President Donald Trump blamed Iran for carrying out a drone strike on a cargo ship in the Strait, calling it a "foolish violation" of the ceasefire agreement. Trump said one drone hit the upper deck of the ship, but the ship was able to proceed. He added that the US shot down three other drones.

On Thursday the British military said a vessel was hit by a projectile off the coast of Oman.

The region has been on edge – with a missile alert being sounded in UAE's Dubai on Friday due to a technical error. —*Agencies*

>>>*More on Page 6*

Venezuela toll is 589; 50,000 missing

CARACAS, 26 JUNE

The death toll from the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes in Venezuela rose to 589, with 2,980 injured, acting President Delcy Rodríguez said on Friday. UN Aid Chief Tom Fletcher told AFP that 50,000 people are still misisng.

"We are going to rescue the people who are trapped," Delcy said, surrounded by rescue crews from across the globe.

Patients outside a hospital in Catia La Mar, Venezuela —*PTI*

EAM S Jaishankar announced 'Operation Amistad' (friendship in Spanish), where two Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft took off for Venezuela, with an Army Field Hospital Unit, 35 tonnes of relief supplies and medical equipment. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 6*

AFTER SEVERAL DEATHS

Bandipur and Nagarahole safari to reopen after 9 months

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Karnataka has fully reopened jungle safaris at Bandipur and Nagarahole Tiger Reserves following a Technical Committee assessment, with directions to operate in a regulated manner, according to a statement from the Chief Minister's office.

Safaris were suspended on 7 November 2025 after a series of wildlife attacks claimed three lives in 15 days, with one person permanently disabled. Rural and Panchayat Development Minister Eshwar B Khandre defended the suspension, saying it was necessary to protect human lives. He also noted that farmer organisations had also raised concerns about heavy vehicle traffic disturbing wildlife when Opposition Leader R Ashoka noted over 4,000 jobs were lost during the suspension.

Khandre said Bandipur has a 314-kilometre border, of which 100 km is a high-conflict zone. Twenty-five anti-poaching camps were established, staff was appointed for 14-hour patrols, and a command centre was made operational. Khandre clarified that the safari was resumed after all preparations were made to prevent further disasters

A technical committee of scientists and wildlife experts was subsequently constituted. Based on its preliminary report, the government resumed safaris in a phased manner with restrictions in February. Following the committee's final report, full reopening has now been approved. —*Agencies*

—SCREENGRAB

Man severely injured after tree branch falls on him in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

A 52-year-old man was seriously injured after a tree branch fell on his head while he was riding a two-wheeler in the City, police said on Friday. The incident took place on Wednesday evening near Ram Mandir Road in Rajajinagar when Satish was on his way to collect a finance payment, they said.

However, the video of the incident went viral on Friday, showing Satish riding without a helmet when the branch suddenly broke off and fall him, causing him to lose control of the motorcycle and crash. People nearby rushed to his help after finding him unconscious on the road.

He was taken to a hospital, where he is being treated for severe head injuries, a senior police officer said. Local residents blamed the Forest Department and civic authorities for alleged negligence, claiming they had repeatedly complained about the dry and dangerous tree but no action was taken. —*PTI*

Ryots' nod must for Bidadi project: HDK

Says he will wait for CM in Bidadi today

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Friday said that he had no objection to the Bidadi township project, provided that farmers willingly consent to part with the land. However, "threatening them is not right".

He added that he would wait for Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at Byramangala in Bidadi on 27 June until Saturday afternoon for an "open discussion" in the presence of affected farmers with the Congress leader. Shivakumar and Kumaraswamy have repeatedly challenged each other for debates. Recently, Shivakumar called Kumaraswamy to Vidhana Soudha on 26 June, but the JD(S) leader said he was available only on 27 June.

"I will be happy if he comes. I have written to him asking him to come for discussions. He has not replied yet. We are only supporting the protest being carried out by farmers," Kumaraswamy said.

"Some farmers may have agreed to give land. But a large number of farmers are saying they will not give land. They have all the information. But the government is trying to crack down on everyone. This is not the right approach," Kumaraswamy added.

He said he had no prestige attached to the matter but asked, "why go ahead with it when there is strong opposition?"

Kumaraswamy said that he will support the farmers protesting at Byramangala, stressing that they are not going there to "create trouble."

To a question on Magadi Congress MLA Balakrishna's statement that a law and order issue would arise if there were a debate regarding the project at Byramangala, Kumaraswamy said in that case, the farmers should be brought to Vidhana Soudha for discussion.

"When I was the CM in 2006-07, three meetings were held at home office Krishna with the opposing farmers. Open opportunities were given to farmers," he said. —*Agencies*

> **Instead of developing the township (in Bidadi), the government should consider places such as Gauribidanur or Chikkaballapura, where large tracts of land are available and connectivity to the airport is better. The proposed township should be shifted outside the northern outskirts of Bengaluru.**
>
> -Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, LoP in the Council

WHY THE SLUGFEST?

Despite a section of farmers and villagers protesting against the project for over 470 days, the government recently issued a final notification for the acquisition of 499 acres across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks, near DK Shivakumar's home district of Kanakapura, for the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township. The project is expected to cover 7,481 acres across nine villages in the region, aimed at relieving the stress in Bengaluru and developing a massive "futuristic" tech hub. —*PTI*

No forced evictions for township: DyCM

'GBIT is not AI hub, but to destress B'luru'

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara on Friday said the State government would only acquire land for the Bidadi township if farmers consent to the project.

He said the government's goal is to develop the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) without any conflict or confusion.

"We will not evict farmers. There is no point in forcibly removing farmers to construct a township. We will take them into confidence and acquire land only with their consent. The Chief Minister has already issued clear instructions to this effect," Parameshwara said in Bengaluru.

IT/BT and Home Minister Priyank Kharge had raised concerns about the water that AI data centres uses. He had said that every 5 prompts on ChatGPT uses ½ a litre.

"At present, no one has complete clarity about all the requirements and parameters for establishing AI centers. Each one is saying different things. This project is not being undertaken specifically for AI hubs," he said when asked if the government was planning the township with a long-term view of securing water resources for future AI hubs.

He said the objective of the township is to reduce the pressure on Bengaluru, including severe traffic jams.

"When the NICE project was conceived, there was a proposal to develop seven townships around Bengaluru. The idea was to reduce the burden on the City by developing nearby towns such as Kolar, Tumakuru, Ramanagara, and Bidadi. If these surrounding areas are developed, it will ease the pressure on Bengaluru. We are hopeful that the Bidadi Township will contribute toward that objective," he added.

Parameshwara also indicated that the government was willing to hike the compensation given to farmers. The government fixed the land price at Rs 2.30 crore per acre. The payout also includes extra money depending on the types of crops growing on the land. "If the farmers feel that the compensation being offered is not adequate, there is also the possibility of increasing it further." —*Agencies*

Centre restores historic Kolar sports ground

KOLAR GOLD FIELDS, 26 JUNE

The Historic Gymkhana Ground at Oorgaum, one of the oldest sporting venues in Kolar Gold Fields, is being restored under the Centre's Khelo India programme through efforts of KGF Superintendent of Police Shivamshu Rajput and Kolar MP M Mallesh Babu. Built in 1885 during the British era, the venue is being renovated with modern football and athletics facilities, pavilion repairs, new washrooms and other amenities at a cost of about Rs 30 lakh, funded by Bharat Gold Mines Limited, Khelo India, district police and other organisations. SP Rajput said the restoration would promote youth participation and the two-day Gold Rush Cup 2026 football tournament this weekend would support anti-drug awareness campaign across KGF. —***SALAR NEWS***

No biz ties with DKS: BYV on cross-voting

MANGALURU, 26 JUNE

State BJP President BY Vijayendra on Friday rejected allegations from leaders that he was responsible for the cross-voting debacle during the recent MLC polls by dismissing claims that he had a personal or business relationship with Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. He even visited Manjunatha Swamy temple at Dharmasthala and offered prayers. "I said that the legislature party meeting should be held in Dharmasthala and the legislators should take the oath of truth before the god at the holy place," Vijayendra told press. The meeting was cancelled after senior leaders told him not to involve the holy place in the matter, but Vijayendra said he came to take the blessing of the god. "It was projected as though I ensured MLAs cross-voted. Our own people may be behind it. But, I'm clarifying that there is no question of me indulging in such cheap tactics. There is no business relationship between me and Shivakumar. I accord him the respect that should be given to the CM of the state," he said. Reacting to comments by expelled leader ST Somashekar who blamed Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje and Vijayendra for the MLAs' cross-voting, the BJP State President said said, "Somashekar was in contact with three of our MLAs and he is making such comments to protect them. The truth will come out in the days ahead."—***PTI***

Metal chain caught between Metro doors caused disruption

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) on Friday said preliminary findings suggest the previous day's disruption on the Purple Line was likely caused by a commuter's metal chain getting lodged in a Metro door guideway at Cubbon Park station.

Services were disrupted for 17 minutes on Thursday evening after a Challaghatta-bound train at Cubbon Park Metro Station failed to close properly, resulting in a temporary halt between 7.36pm and 7.54pm. The snag delayed at least five services moving in the same direction.

Commuters were deboarded at Cubbon Park for a "safety procedure," necessitated by what was earlier considered a "technical snag".

"A detailed examination of the train and its door systems has confirmed that there was no technical malfunction in the train equipment," a BMRCL statement read.

- Metro services were disrupted for 17 minutes on Thursday evening after a Challaghatta-bound train at Cubbon Park Metro Station failed to close properly

This is the second disruption on the Purple Line in the past two days.

A separate technical snag at Cubbon Park station disrupted peak-hour services on Tuesday when a train's Current Collector Device (CCD) was damaged, bringing the train to a complete halt in the underground tunnel before it could reach Cubbon Park station. —*PTI*

BEML secures $5.35M export order from W Asia

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

State-owned BEML Ltd on Friday announced securing an additional export order valued at USD 5.35 million from West Asia for the supply of heavy earthmoving equipment.

The order is in continuation of the company's earlier export contract worth USD 36.38 million, announced in April 2026, it said.

According to the company, originally developed for large-scale mining applications, BEML's heavy earthmoving equipment has been suitably engineered to cater to the evolving requirements of infrastructure development and strategic construction projects.

The machines are designed to deliver superior performance under demanding operating conditions, incorporating advanced engineering, enhanced durability, and compliance with stringent international quality standards.

They are also equipped with ergonomically designed, ROPS/FOPS-certified operator cabins, ensuring enhanced safety, operator comfort, and productivity, BEML Ltd said.

"As part of the order, BEML will provide comprehensive maintenance and lifecycle support through its local representative in the region," the company stated. —*PTI*

12 arrested in crypto scam

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Police have detained twelve individuals for allegedly assaulting and robbing a man of Rs 17.64 lakh, to conver Indian currency into USDT cryptocurrency. Authorities recovered Rs 13.90 lakh, 7 vehicles and 13 phones.

The incident was reported after a resident within Sanjaynagar Police Station, filed a complaint on 10 June.

The man planning a café joined a USDT trading WhatsApp group.

On 9 June, he went to Kalpana Chawla Road to exchange Rs 17.64 lakh. However, suspects assaulted him, his brother, and friend, and fled with the cash. Four suspects were arrested near Devasandra on 11 June.

They confessed to the crime with eight others, bringing the total to twelve. The remaining suspect is at large. —*PTI*

SIR AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

With house-to-house enumeration for the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls set to begin from 30 June in Karnataka, Greater Bengaluru Authority officials held a meeting with Muslim community members to raise awareness about the process and clear doubts about the the required documentation. The meeting, held at Khadriya Masjid, Millers Road, in Bengaluru on Friday, was organised by Jumma Masjid Trust —***ASAD***

POTHOLE TO BLAME?

Driver booked as 5 children fall out of school bus

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

An FIR has been registered against the driver of a school van after a video went viral online showing at least five children falling onto a road in Bengaluru when the vehicle's rear door suddenly opened while it was in motion, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred in Gayatri Layout in Bengaluru, was captured on a CCTV camera installed in the locality.

The van was transporting school children and reportedly hit a pothole. The impact is believed to have caused the rear door to swing open, which resulted in five children seated at the back being thrown onto the road.

CCTV footage shows at least five children falling onto a road in Bengaluru when a school van's rear door swung open -***SCREENGRAB***

According to the police, the children escaped with minor injuries as there was no traffic on the stretch at the time and they were provided immediate medical attention by residents.

Traffic police later seized the van as part. Officials said that they are examining the exact circumstances that led to the rear door opening, including whether there was any mechanical failure or negligence on the part of the vehicle driver. Further investigation is underway. —*Salar News*

Clash outside Malur police station over FIR against ex-legislator

KOLAR, 26 JUNE

Tensions erupted outside Masthi Police Station in Malur taluk in Kolar on Friday as hundreds of supporters of former MLA KS Manjunath Gowda protested against an FIR filed against him. The police registered the case after JD(S) leader Hoodi Vijayakumar alleged Gowda trespassed on disputed land in Agalakunte village.

Gowda insists the land belongs to the government and claims revenue records have been forged to encroach upon it. Protesters accused the police of acting under political pressure and demanded action against the Circle Inspector.

Deputy Superintendent Krishnappa visited the scene and assured Gowda that the allegations would be investigated. Gowda has been petitioning authorities over alleged manipulation of revenue records to facilitate land encroachment.

Vijayakumar, who states the land was bought by associates, lodged the complaint on Thursday. Land disputes have increased due to rising prices linked to the Chennai-Bengaluru Expressway and industrial expansion.

The government has set up a committee to probe irregularities in land records at the Taluk Office. —*Salar News*

—AI

LIVE-IN PARTNER ARRESTED IN B'LURU TRIPLE MURDER AFTER 3 DAYS

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Days after Bengaluru techie Shwetha, 25, was arrested for allegedly killing her parents and sister, her live-in partner and co-accused, Kenneth, was traced and detained in Puducherry on Friday.

According to police, Shwetha allegedly carried out the murders in with Kenneth on Monday night at an apartment under KR Puram Police Station limits.

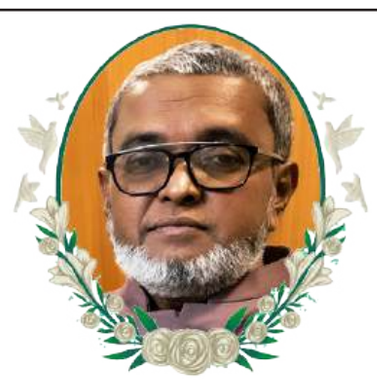
Victims Somasundar, 52, his wife Muthulaxmi, 48, and their younger daughter Supriya, 19, were found stabbed to death.

Kenneth reportedly taken shelter in beach shacks in Puducherry to avoid detection before being found.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Shwetha's family disapproved of the relationship, possibly triggering the murders.

Police said the victims had visited the couple's flat on Monday evening, where an argument allegedly broke out, and all three were stabbed multiple times.

A joint interrogation of both accused is expected to establish the sequence of events and motive. Further investigation is underway. – *PTI*



JAFAR ALI KHAN

S/O Late Raheem Khan Saheb

Date of Death : 24.06.2026

M/S Md. Lifters, Classique East Point Apartment,
Flat # T - 1, 3rd Floor,M K Palya, Frazer Town, Bengaluru - 560005.

Salaatul Janaaza was held after Asar prayer on same day at Sir Ismail Sait Masjid, Frazer Town.
Matfoon held at Neelassndra Makaan

By: HAJI LIYAKHAT ALI KHAN, elder brother of deceased.
M/S. Industrial Cranes, Whitefield, Bengaluru.
Contact: 98450 13107

— ANI

India's envoy Kwatra discusses trade with US

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

India's envoy to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, held discussions with the leadership and members of the House Ways and Means Committee on strengthening bilateral trade relations. Kwatra described the meeting as a "special roundtable discussion on key aspects of the US-India trade relationship," adding, "We exchanged views and discussed the way forward to deepen the trade partnership." The talks take place amid negotiations to finalise an interim bilateral trade agreement. The Committee on Ways and Means, the oldest US Congress committee and the chief tax-writing body, was represented by Chairman Jason Smith, a Republican, and Ranking Member Richard Neal, a Democrat. Commerce Minister Piyush said the trade deal with the US is "very close," but it cannot proceed unless India secures a "tariff advantage over competitors."—*PTI*

Politics is in 'we' not 'I': Pandian's wife joins BJD

BHUBANESWAR, 26 JUNE

Sujata Rout Karthikeyan, a former IAS officer and wife of ex-bureaucrat VK Pandian, joined the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and said the future of politics lies in "we" not "I", stressing teamwork and shared responsibility. A 2000-batch Odisha cadre IAS officer, she followed her husband, who resigned from civil service in October 2023 and joined BJD in November. Pandian, a close aide of Naveen Patnaik, withdrew from active politics in June 2024. Sujata's social media post outlined her philosophy, stating "'I' builds personality cults, seeks personal credit, and concentrates power. 'We' values teamwork and unites." She added that "'we' and 'I' are two words, two paths, and the choice defines our politics." —*PTI*

M'rashtra court jails BJP leader, aide for assault

GONDIA, 26 JUNE

A court in Maharashtra's Gondia district sentenced BJP councillor Shiv Sharma and his aide Rahul Shrivas to five years in prison for manhandling a former MLA during a 2016 press conference. District and Additional Sessions Judge AS Pratinidhi found them guilty under section 325 of the Indian Penal Code. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 each. In April 2016, Sharma and Shrivas entered a hotel where Congress MLA Gopaldas Agrawal was briefing reporters, and Sharma slapped him. Shrivas also manhandled Agrawal and his son, who tried to protect him. The case was registered on a complaint, leading to their conviction and sentencing.—*PTI*

Ex-AAP candidate found dead, kin blame partner

RAJKOT, 26 JUNE

The family of 23-year-old Nandani Bosamiya, a former AAP candidate, has accused her live-in partner of murder after her body was found hanging in a flat near Gondal Chowkdi. Police say the case appears to be a suicide, but her family claims she was murdered and the scene staged. Nandani's sister, Rupal Bosamiya, alleged, "Aslam had been mentally and physically harassing Nandani." The family pointed to marks on her neck and disturbed surroundings, suggesting a struggle. Nandani had been living with Aslam Hussain, who is married with a child, and the couple had frequent disputes. The police are investigating all angles of the incident, and the Women's Commission has also sought a report. —*ANI*

Will amend NDPS Act to crack down on drugs: Shah

Centre calls for ruthless approach towards drug peddlers

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that the Centre is "relooking" at the NDPS Act to plug loopholes exploited by narco syndicates and underlined the need for a ruthless approach towards drug peddlers and suppliers.

Addressing the 10th meeting of the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) on Friday, Shah asked the states to share their suggestions with the Centre on amending the law.

He also spoke about the success achieved by agencies in tackling the drug menace in the country.

"During 2004 to 2014, 26 lakh kilograms of synthetic drugs were seized. In contrast, from 2014 to 2026, we seized 1.18 crore kilograms of synthetic drugs. This shows that our campaign is progressing," he said.

Amit Shah said the value of the drugs seized between 2004 and 2014 was Rs 40K crore, while the value of those seized after 2014 was Rs 1.84L cr—*PTI*

Shah said the value of the drugs seized between 2004 and 2014 was approximately Rs 40,000 crore, whereas the value of the drugs seized between 2014 and 2026 was approximately Rs 1.84 lakh crore.

This reflects the remarkable increase in the effectiveness and scope of the government's actions, he said.

Shah said the Union Ministry of Finance is "relooking" at the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act to strengthen it and asked states to share their suggestions.

He said DGPs can send their suggestions to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the chief secretaries to the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance. Shah also unveiled a three-pronged approach against drug trafficking, detect, disrupt and destroy.

He called for an approach based on enforcement, intelligence and dissemination and operations; control against precursors and synthetic drugs; demand reduction and awareness among people; and capacity building, and monitoring by anti-narcotics agencies. — *PTI*

Ayodhya will turn into BJP's 'Lanka,' quips Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, 26 JUNE

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday asserted that Ayodhya will prove to be the "Lanka" for the BJP and the mask of the "devout" will come off.

Lanka Kaand is an important chapter of Ramcharitmanas that symbolises the victory of good over evil with Lord Ram killing demon Ravan. "The Lanka Kaand of the BJP will take place in Ayodhya itself. The mask worn by these 'daan-bhakto' (devotees of charity) has finally come off, because the Lord's divine power has indeed revealed its miracle," Yadav said on X in Hindi, referring to the scam in cash donated to the Ram Temple. "Now, the glittering Lanka empire of the BJP's arrogance will meet its end, as well as the 'Lankadhipati' himself," he said.

The former UP CM also said

Seal the borders to catch sanghis fleeing with loot, said Akhilesh—*PTI*

that the ruling BJP used to claim that its office-bearers do not give resignations and are now calling their act of quitting "tyagpatras". This is just the beginning, and an infight is in the offing, he asserted.

"Amid this battle of division, their 'band of parties, Sangh, Sabha, Parishad, Vahini, and Trust' will now expose one another's secrets. The borders ought to be sealed before they can flee in different directions with their 'sacks and bags' stuffed with stolen loot," he said. —*PTI*

WB will implement UCC like in Assam, Gujarat: CM

KOLKATA, 26 JUNE

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Friday said his government would implement the Uniform Civil Code in the state by following due legal procedures, similar to the process adopted by Gujarat and Assam.

Speaking at a government programme to celebrate the 189th birth anniversary of literary icon Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay at College Street in Kolkata, he said the state would adhere to the prescribed process for implementing UCC.

"There is a procedure for UCC implementation, and we will adhere to that. This will be similar to Gujarat and Assam," he said, referring to the two states that have initiated legislative steps for adopting a Uniform Civil Code.

The BJP government in West Bengal is likely to introduce the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the assembly on Monday during its budget session, much ahead of the party-stated six-month deadline, a source in the Adhikari cabinet said.

The matter was finalised in a Business Advisory Committee meeting held in the assembly on Thursday, he added.

The development could mark one of the most consequential social policy shifts in Bengal in recent times, with the BJP holding the UCC as representing both a major governance promise and a politically significant reform. — *PTI*

VIJAY RUNS ANTI-DRUG MARATHON

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Friday ran a 6 km anti-drug marathon with thousands of participants, breaking away from the traditional role of merely flagging off the event. The 52-year-old Vijay, clad in athletic gear and sporting coolers at Chennai's Marina Beach, made history as the first sitting Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to run such a distance with the public for a social cause. This was to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. —*PTI*

'Keralam liquor policy only after talks within UDF'

T'PURAM, 26 JUNE

Keralam Revenue Minister **AP Anil Kumar** said on Friday that any policy decision on tax cut for low-alcohol beverages will be taken only after discussions within the UDF and with the Congress leadership.

The budget proposed a 120 per cent sales tax on drinks containing 0.5 to 10 per cent alcohol by volume and 175 per cent on those containing more than 10 per cent and up to 20 per cent.

Chief Minister VD Satheesan, who holds the finance portfolio, has maintained that the budget only provides the tax framework and that no final decision has been taken.

Minister Kumar said policy matters would not be decided unilaterally.

Meanwhile, Thalassery Archbishop Joseph Pamplany welcomed Satheesan's decision to hold discussions on the issue.

Samastha Kerala Jemiyyathul Ulama President Jifri Muthukoya Thangal said that governments have framed their own liquor policies irrespective of any community's views.

BJP Kerala president Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Friday criticised the state government over its proposal to reduce the tax on low-alcohol beverages, alleging that it was sending contradictory messages as the Kerala Home Department was running the anti-narcotics campaign "Operation Toofan." — *PTI*

Councillors of BJP & CPI(M) booked after clash in T'puram

T'PURAM, 26 JUNE

Police have registered separate cases against BJP councillors, including Mayor VV Rajesh, and CPI(M) ward members following a clash at the Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation office on Thursday. The incident occurred when the two sides clashed outside the Mayor's chamber, leading to injuries among several councillors, who were subsequently hospitalised. According to police, a complaint lodged by CPI(M) councillor Sindhu Sasi resulted in a case against Mayor Rajesh, Deputy Mayor Asha Nath, and BJP councillors Girikumar, Jaya Rajeev, Madhu, Gopan, Sumi Balu, R C Beena, Manju and Sruthy.

Similarly, BJP councillor Sruthy SS's complaint led to a case against CPI(M) councillors SP Deepak, Rakhi Ravikumar, Chellamangalam Arun, Venugopal and Renjith. The police registered charges under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including unlawful assembly,

Police protects Mayor VV Rajesh, front centre, as CPI(M) councillors stage a protest outside the former's chamber in T'puram on Thursday—*PTI*

rioting, voluntarily causing hurt, intentional insult, and wrongful restraint.

The confrontation arose when Mayor Rajesh, accompanied by BJP councillors, attempted to access his office but was blocked by CPI(M) councillors, triggering a brief scuffle. Several councillors sustained injuries and were taken to hospital. The incident prompted protests across Thiruvananthapuram.

The NDA gained control of the Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation in December 2025, ending the LDF's 45-year rule by winning 50 of the 101 seats. — *PTI*

JAPANESE PM SANAE TAKAICHI TO VISIT INDIA NEXT WEEK

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi will undertake a three-day visit to India next week to explore ways to expand bilateral ties in a range of areas including trade, investment and defence.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Takaichi will be on an official visit to New Delhi from 1 to 3 July for the 16th India-Japan annual summit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.

"The Summit will provide an opportunity for both sides to strengthen the full spectrum of cooperation as well as exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," it said.

It would be the first official visit of Takaichi to India. This visit follows Modi's visit to Tokyo in August 2025 for the 15th India-Japan annual summit and reflects the shared commitment of the two countries to further

enhance India-Japan Special Strategic and Global partnership, the MEA said in a statement.

Following last year's summit, Japan set an investment target of 10 trillion yen (approx Rs 60,000 cr) in India over a decade.

The two sides also sealed a raft of big-ticket pacts including a framework for defence ties and a 10-year roadmap to largely boost economic partnership.

Earlier this week, a plan to hold the summit in Assam was shelved due to Takaichi's tight schedule and logistical issues. —*PTI*

NEET FIASCO

CJP launches 'Pradhan Go Back' campaign

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Friday announced the launch of a nationwide campaign to demand Union Education Minister Pradhan's resignation and exhorted students, farmers and civil society groups to join him at Jantar Mantar on 28 June.

Addressing a press conference here, Dipke said activist Sonam Wangchuk would also join the campaign, "Pradhan Go Back", at Jantar Mantar on Sunday and begin an indefinite fast. He, however, did not elaborate on what the campaign would entail.

The CJP founder urged Prime Minister Modi to ensure that Pradhan resigns, saying that he would be seen as an "incompetent PM" if he failed to do so.

Dipke also demanded a compensation of Rs 1 crore each for the families of students who ended their lives—*PTI*

The CJP, which started as a digital satirical outfit, has been holding a sit-in at Jantar Mantar since 20 June to demand Pradhan's resignation over the NEET paper-leak controversy.

"It has been a week and Dharmendra Pradhan has not taken any responsibility for the paper leaks," Dipke said.

- Dipke urged PM Modi to ensure that Pradhan resigns, saying that he would be seen as an "incompetent PM" if he failed to do so

Dipke also demanded a compensation of Rs 1 crore each for the families of students who died by suicide.

Asked about the Congress' proposed protest on the issue, Dipke said parties should rise above their political differences and speak up for the students. He alleged that some protesters and volunteers at Jantar Mantar had been attacked by hooligans and accused police of failing to take action despite complaints being made. —*PTI*

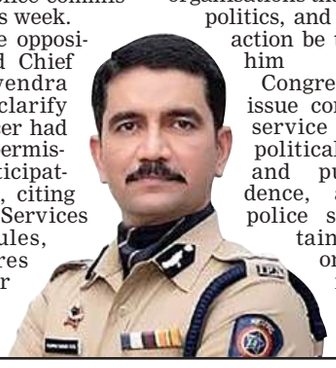
IPS officer praises RSS at event, Cong seeks probe

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

The Congress in Maharashtra has demanded an inquiry into a speech by IPS officer Vishwas Nangare Patil at a Hindu Sakal Samaj event which went viral, where he 'praised' the RSS, stating that it questions his neutrality and regulatory adherence.

The IPS officer was appointed the Nagpur police commissioner earlier this week.

In a X post, the opposition party asked Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to clarify whether the officer had obtained prior permission before participating in the event, citing the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, which requires obtaining prior approval before participating in such a programme and also bars members of the service from being associated with organisations that take part in politics, and if not, would action be taken against him



Congress said the issue concerned civil service credibility, political neutrality, and public confidence, adding that police should maintain law and order, not glorify divisive organisations. —*PTI*

- In an X post, the Congress asked the CM to clarify whether the officer had obtained permission before attending the event

—SCREENGRAB

4 bodies of Indians killed in Qatar blast repatriated

DOHA, 26 JUNE

The bodies of four of the 12 Indians who were killed in an explosion at a factory operated by QatarEnergy LNG, in Ras Laffan city in Qatar, are being repatriated to the country on Thursday, the Indian Embassy in Doha said in a post on X on Thursday. "We hope to repatriate the other bodies too soon. Embassy has kept the families informed," it said. "We thank the Qatari authorities as well as Indian organisations for their support. Embassy has also been in touch with Indians who are injured in the accident," the post said. Twelve Indians were among the 13 killed in the explosion on Sunday. One was a Pakistani. —*PTI*

Doctors oppose Tripura ban on private practice

AGARTALA, 26 JUNE

A forum of doctors has protested the Tripura government's move to ban private practice by medical staff at AGMC & GB Pant Hospital, stating it won't improve healthcare unless issues like manpower shortages and infrastructure gaps are addressed. The Superspeciality Doctors' Forum criticised the decision as unconsulted and unfair, noting many members joined without such restrictions. They argued that banning private practice undermines their service commitments and called for an 'opt-in not opt-out' approach. Leaders of opposition and senior doctors criticised the move, warning that it could harm healthcare and lead many senior doctors to quit government service. —*PTI*

Licence cancelled for supplying fake oxytocin

KOTA, 26 JUNE

Rajasthan's drug control department cancelled the licence of Rajasthan Medical Hall after discovering that spurious oxytocin injections were supplied to government hospitals. Laboratory tests showed the sample contained nil oxytocin, possibly linked to five women's deaths post-Caesarean sections in May. The department cited discrepancies in procurement and sales records, with the firm buying 9,300 doses but recording sales of 10,050. The investigation team found suspected fake oxytocin injections and gross violations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. The firm's licence was revoked, and authorities are continuing to probe whether the fake drugs contributed to the women's deaths. They also traced the full supply chain of the fake drugs right from the manufacturer. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Son kills father with tractor over land dispute

JAIPUR, 26 JUNE

A land dispute in Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district led to the death of Mahavir Prasad, 65, allegedly killed by his son Shamsher Singh, 38, who ran him over with a tractor. The incident happened late Thursday in Dhosi village. Police said Singh assaulted his father, dragged him onto the road, and deliberately rammed the tractor into him despite locals' efforts to intervene. Mahavir was taken to Khetri hospital, where he was declared dead. The father and son had a three-year-long land dispute and Shamsher Singh was living separately. Police registered a murder case, and further investigation is on. —*PTI*

Names of 6 soldiers killed during Op Sindoor revealed

Their names will be written on the National War Memorial

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Five Indian Army soldiers and one IAF serviceman were among the six killed during Operation Sindoor, India's response to the Pahalgam massacre, against Pakistan in May 2025.

This is the first time since the operation that the government has released the names of the six military personnel who were killed during Operation Sindoor.

The names of these soldiers will be inscribed at the National War Memorial in New Delhi.

Subedar Major Pawan Kumar, Rifleman Sunil Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar, Agniveer Murali Naik, Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh, and Indian Air Force Sergeant Surendra Kumar were among those killed in the line of duty.

The names of these Operation Sindoor heroes were released alongside the list of all soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice during various military operations in 2025.

India launched strikes on 7 May 2025 on terrorist camps in Pakistan and POK in retaliation for the terror attack in Pahalgam—*PIB*

The 'Tyag Chakra' (Circle of Sacrifice) at the National War Memorial is dedicated to the nation's bravehearts. It comprises 16 circular granite walls; the name, rank, and unit of every soldier who made the supreme sacrifice for the country after Independence are inscribed on the bricks of these walls.

Now, these six heroes from Operation Sindoor will also become a permanent part of this memorial.

India launched strikes on 7 May 2025, targeting terrorist camps in Pakistan and POK Kashmir in retaliation for the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam that claimed 26 Indian civilian lives.

Pakistan retaliated immediately, triggering aerial engagements, drone and missile attacks and heavy artillery shelling across the border by both sides.

- Subedar Major Pawan Kumar, Rifleman Sunil Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar, Agniveer Murali Naik, Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh, and IAF Sergeant Surendra Kumar were among those killed in the line of duty during Op Sindoor

The military operation, named 'Operation Sindoor,' carried deep symbolic messaging.

The word 'Sindoor' refers to the red vermillion traditionally worn by married Hindu women and was chosen to signify vengeance for the widowing of women whose husbands were killed in the terror attack.

The conflict between the two neighbouring countries, which lasted four days, ended on 10 May 2025. — Agencies

Chetan instigated Siya to kill her fiancée: Police

PUNE, 26 JUNE

The probe into the alleged murder of realtor Ketan Agarwal has revealed that it was co-accused Chetan Chaudhary who instigated Agarwal's fiancee Siya Goyal to eliminate him, a police official claimed on Friday.

Siya's brother was also questioned in the case, he said.

Asked about media reports claiming that Siya disliked Agarwal as he wore a wig, a police source said it was true that Agarwal wore a wig, but it could not be said that it was the sole reason Siya did not like him.

Lovers Goyal, 20, and Chaudhary, 22, are accused of conspiring to kill 25-year-old Agarwal who was allegedly pushed off a cliff at Lohagad Fort in the district on 18 June.

On Thursday, a Pune Rural Police official had said that on reaching the cliff, Siya gave a signal to Chaudhary who pushed Agarwal to his death.

Meanwhile, Siya's mother claimed that her daughter was reluctant to visit Lohagad Fort on 18 June, but Agarwal and his mother persuaded her to go.

"On the evening of 17 June, Siya and Ketan had a video call, during which Ketan asked her to accompany him to Lohagad. During the call, Ketan's mother also asked her to go with him. Siya told her that she did not want to go trekking as there was a function next day," her mother said.

Siya's father dismissed reports that the family had booked a palace in Udaipur for the wedding and arranged a chartered aircraft. — *PTI*

- On reports that Siya disliked Agarwal as he wore a wig, police said Agarwal wore a wig, but that was not the sole reason for the murder

J'khand man hires goons to kill dad to get his job

DHANBAD, 26 JUNE

A man in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district has been arrested for allegedly hiring assassins to murder his father to secure his job at Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) on compassionate grounds.

Dhanbad Rural SP S Mohammed Yakub said the deceased, Tuleshwar Nonia, was a worker at a BCCL colliery in Barora with two years of service remaining. His son Vijay Chauhan allegedly conspired to kill him so he could claim a permanent job at the colliery following his father's death. Chauhan allegedly offered Rs 10 lakh to Amit Singh and Akhilesh Mallah, both of Badaura Colony.

Chauhan left home on Friday claiming to attend a wedding in Aurangabad. That night, Singh and Mallah offered Nonia a bike ride after his shift, took him to a secluded spot, and bludgeoned him to death with a stone. — *PTI*

'Those who target kids must be punished'

UNITED NATIONS, 26 JUNE

India has called for bringing to account those who target schools and children with impunity, underscoring that protection of children without accountability is incomplete.

"Education is a right that should endure in times of conflict. India remains unwavering in its commitment to protecting children during conflict and to uphold their right to learn, and to grow," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni said.

He was addressing the UN Security Council debate on 'Strengthening the Prevention of and Protection of Education for Children Affected by Armed Conflict: From Normative Commitments to Effective Implementation' here Wednesday.

The UN Secretary General's latest report on 'Children and armed conflict' said that in 2025, violations against children in conflict areas reached "shocking levels."

The UN verified 38,558 grave violations, which affected 24,174 children in 2025 (15,493 boys, 7,990 girls, 691 sex unknown), the highest number of children affected by violations since the beginning of the mandate. The number of children subjected to grave violations continued to rise from 3,137 in 2024 to 3,176 in 2025.

India noted that the Secretary-General's 2025 Annual Report on Children and A rmed Conflict presents "alarming statistics," attacks on schools rose by 44 per cent in a single year.

Parvathaneni said nearly 473 million children live in or are fleeing conflict zones, and 85 million have no access to education whatsoever. "These figures are a damning verdict on humanity's failure to translate commitments into reality on the ground," he said. — *PTI*

NIA CHARGES 11 WITH SPREADING TERRORIST IDEAS IN WB & NE

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The NIA has charged 11 people in connection with a conspiracy by an offshoot of the proscribed Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh terror outfit to spread its ideology in West Bengal and NE states, officials said on Friday.

The NIA found the active involvement of the accused in the conspiracy orchestrated by the Imam Mahmuder Kafila (IMK), an offshoot of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The accused have been named in the chargesheet filed before the NIA Special Court in Guwahati, it said.

The conspiracy involved promotion of Bangladesh-based terrorist organisation's extremist agenda, radicalisation of youth, and expansion of the outfit's network in India.

Investigations by the anti-terror organisation showed that the JBM senior member Imam Mahmud Habibullah had established the IMK to promote its agenda in India, a statement issued by the NIA said.

The NIA investigations revealed that the 11 chargesheeted people had conspired to expand the presence of the IMK/JMB in India through meetings, indoctrination programmes, circulation of literature, and use of digital platforms.

Two of the key chargesheeted accused have been identified as Nasimuddin, who was spearheading the IMK's programmes in Assam, and Jagir Mia, who was heading the outfit in Tripura, the NIA said. — *PTI*

PROBLEM RESOLVED

Officials said the Nihangs called off their protest march regarding a dispute at the Karnaprayag market and a gurudwara in Nagrasu —*PTI*

Nihang-cop standoff ends in Uttarakhand, group returns to HP

DEHRADUN, 26 JUNE

After hours of a standoff between a group of Nihangs and the administration on the Himachal Pradesh-Uttarakhand border here, the group left for Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh early on Friday following negotiations with authorities.

The development brought an end to the tension that gripped the Kulhal checkpoint in the Vikasnagar area on Thursday night, where a large group of the Sikh sect clashed with the police, and pushed through barricades in an attempt to go towards Hemkund Sahib, a Sikh pilgrimage centre, in Uttarakhand. Officials said the Nihangs called off their protest march regarding a recent dispute at the Karnaprayag market in Chamoli and a gurudwara in Nagrasu.

After meeting police and district administration officials, the group, which had gathered at the Race Course Gurudwara in Dehradun, left the premises at around 3.30 am in two vehicles under police escort across the state border.

- After meeting police and district officials, the group, which had gathered at the Race Course Gurdwara in Dehradun, left around 3.30 am in two vehicles with police escort

On Thursday, there was a heavy police deployment following the announcement by Nihang groups that they would march towards the state. The Kulhal-Vikasnagar outpost was turned into a police zone, with police standing behind metal barricades.

Dehradun District Magistrate Ashish Chauhan said that the problem was resolved amicably.

"The Nihangs returned to Paonta Sahib. Around 150 Nihangs in Paonta Sahib extended cooperation," Chauhan added. The group had reportedly set out from Mohali in Punjab. — *PTI*

Kolkata warehouse crash toll now 15, rescue bid on

West Bengal Minister of State for Fire and Emergency Services Kausik Chowdhury inspects the crash site in the Taratala area of Kolkata —*PTI*

KOLKATA, 26 JUNE

The toll in the Taratala warehouse collapse in south Kolkata rose to 15 on Friday as rescue teams retrieved two more bodies and two others succumbed to their injuries while undergoing treatment, an official said.

Two bodies were recovered late on Thursday night, though their identities are yet to be established, he said. Meanwhile, on Friday morning, two workers, Mannu Kumar and Sahil Sardar, succumbed to their injuries at the state-run SSKM Hospital, taking the toll to 15, the official added.

According to the official, 18 injured are currently admitted to the SSKM Hospital. Several others are still believed to be trapped, another official said.

Meanwhile, personnel from multiple agencies, including Kolkata Police, the army, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the state disaster management group, and the Indian Railways, have been working round the clock since Wednesday, checking underneath the rubble with cameras, cutting through iron beams and clearing massive concrete slabs in a war-footing operation.

The accident occurred on Wednesday afternoon after the roof of the warehouse on the Transport Depot Road in Taratala caved in, trapping many workers inside. —*PTI*

RETURN TO ROOTS

Nonagenarian gives up US citizenship to 'die an Indian'

BAPATLA, 26 JUNE

A nonagenarian woman from Andhra Pradesh has renounced her US citizenship to die as an Indian, an official said on Friday.

Bapatla Collector V Vinod Kumar said K Mahalakshmamma, 94, who had lived in the US for over two decades, gave up her American citizenship to return to her roots in Andhra Pradesh and expressed her desire to die as an Indian.

A native of Chintagumpala village in Bapatla district, Mahalakshmamma moved to the US after the death of her husband, Nagabhushanam, to live with her son, an oncologist.

She acquired US citizenship on 27 July 2000, and returned to India with her family in 2018. Her son, Kondrugunta K Pichchaiah, is now the Director of the NRI Medical College in Guntur, and the family has been staying in their village.

Mahalakshmamma submitted an online application on 1 June seeking restoration of her Indian citizenship. The application was taken up for inquiry on Tuesday.

Kondragunta Mahalakshmamma had moved to the US with her son after the death of her husband and later became an American citizen —*ANI*

He said every applicant seeking Indian citizenship is required to take an Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution of India, under the Citizenship Act, before the District Collector.

As Mahalakshmamma had severe hearing impairment and did not understand English, the oath was translated into Telugu. Her son read the Telugu version aloud to her, and she repeated it before the Collector.

"After administering the oath, I signed Form III and Form VII and forwarded them to the Ministry of Home Affairs. My role in the process is over. The final decision on citizenship is with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs," Kumar said.

He said the application also required certification by an Indian citizen acquainted with the applicant, which was provided by one of her relatives. — *PTI*

Centre relaxes drug safety laws; fines for minor violations

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The Centre has operationalised key reforms under the Jan Vishwas Act, 2026, in the health sector, decriminalising several minor, technical violations under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, while retaining stringent penalties for offences that threaten public health.

The Union health ministry on Friday said the reforms are aimed at promoting ease of doing business and ensuring proportionate enforcement.

Technical violations that earlier attracted prosecution will now be dealt with through penalties. Section 29 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, which prescribed a penalty up to Rs 1 lakh for using a government analyst's report for advertising any drug or cosmetic, has been omitted.

Violations about manufacture or sale of low-risk cosmetics have been brought under penalty framework.

These include cases where cosmetic products fails to comply with minor quality parameters or contain labelling deficiencies and errors. However, offences involving spurious cosmetics continue to attract strict penal provisions under the Act. — *PTI*

WHAT ESTABLISHES CITIZENSHIP IN INDIA?

A clarification by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that the Passport is not a proof of citizenship has once again brought to the fore the need for a legal framework to provide citizens with a single document to establish they are Indians.

As of now, there is no single card - Aadhaar, Voter card or Passport - that acts as a definitive legal citizenship certificate in India.

The Passport has never been a citizenship proof and no new decision was taken on the document by the Narendra Modi government in the last 12 years, government sources said on Thursday.

On media reports on the MEA clarifying that a passport is a travel document and not a proof of citizenship, the sources said it was not decided on Wednesday that the Passport is not a proof of citizenship.

HERE IS AN EXPLAINER ON WHAT ESTABLISHES CITIZENSHIP IN INDIA

1. WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP?

Citizenship is a legal status proven by a combination of a person's birth timeline, parents' status and a set of government-issued civil records provided over the years.

2. WHY DO COMMON GOVERNMENT IDS NOT COUNT?

Judicial precedents clarify that India's most common identity cards are legally excluded from being standalone proofs of citizenship.

a) Passports

While highly verified and issued primarily to citizens, Section 20 of the Passports Act, 1967 allows the government to issue Passports to non-citizens in exceptional cases. Thus, courts view it as powerful evidence but not legal proof.

b) Aadhaar Cards

The Supreme Court and the UIDAI explicitly say that Aadhaar is a proof of residence and identity, not citizenship as non-citizen residents can legally acquire one after following the procedures.

c) Voter IDs and PAN cards

A PAN card is purely a tax identifier. A Voter ID proves you are on the electoral roll, but those rolls can be re-verified on a regular basis.

An Election Commission official had recently said that people who may become part of voter list after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls can "most definitely" be considered a citizen of India. However, possession of the card itself does not automatically settle a legal citizenship dispute under prevailing laws.

3. WHAT ACTUALLY PROVES CITIZENSHIP?

India does not have a single, universal national citizenship card. Legally, citizenship is established through a set of documents depending on how you claim it.

Five ways for any person to become a citizen of India include citizenship by birth, citizenship by descent, citizenship by registration, citizenship by naturalisation and citizenship by incorporation. —*PTI*

Amend laws to make passport, Aadhaar proofs of citizenship, says Tharoor

Amid the row over the passport-citizenship issue, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Friday said the government should amend the legal framework to make both the passport and the Aadhaar card valid and conclusive proofs of Indian citizenship unless they are explicitly cancelled or withdrawn by the state.

He said implementing this requires solving a critical administrative hurdle because Aadhaar is currently issued based on 182 days of local residence rather than nationality, and it is held by citizens and non-citizen residents alike.

"The solution is straightforward. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) should introduce a visually distinct Aadhaar card (featuring, say, a visible diagonal red stripe across the front), specifically designated for non-citizens living in India," Tharoor said.

"The recent statement by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) - on #PassportSevaDivas, no less! - clarifying that an Indian passport is primarily a 'travel document and not conclusive proof of citizenship' has triggered a predictable wave of public bewilderment and political sparring," the former minister of state for external affairs said on X.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor –*PTI*

While the government defends this as a long-standing legal position rooted in Section 20 of the Passports Act of 1967, which technically allows the state to issue passports to non-citizens under rare, public-interest circumstances, this is a distinction without a difference, meaningless to the average citizen, Tharoor argued.

If a passport does not establish domestic citizenship, then what does, asked the MP from Thiruvananthapuram.

Implementing this requires solving a critical administrative hurdle -- because Aadhaar is currently issued based on 182 days of local residence rather than nationality, it is held by citizens and non-citizen residents alike, he pointed out.

"The solution is straightforward. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) should introduce a visually distinct Aadhaar card (featuring, say, a visible diagonal red stripe across the front), specifically designated for non-citizens living in India. By clearly demarcating the two categories, the state can safely mandate that carrying either a standard citizen's Aadhaar or a valid passport is compulsory and sufficient proof of citizenship for all Indian nationals at all times," he said. —*PTI*

LETTERS

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SALAR

Seattle is all set for 'Pride Match' this World Cup

Seattle's stadium is expected to be brimming with rainbow flags on Friday for a World Cup match between teams representing two of the most repressive countries for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

It was just a coincidence that the city's "Pride Match" ended up as a high-stakes matchup between Iran and Egypt — with advancement from Group G still up in the air — and the move has come with plenty of push-back from both countries.

But Seattle officials and its soccer community say this distinctive pairing is an opportunity to showcase the city's inclusivity as well as the common ground that can be found at the World Cup.

Jess Fishlock, captain of the National Women's Soccer League club Seattle Reign, said this is what the World Cup is all about.

"I don't think there is a sport that has a global event that creates unity and diversity and a bringing together of so many cultures quite like the World Cup," she told The Associated Press on Thursday. "I think we get to see that firsthand at the Pride Match."

Same-sex relations are illegal in Iran, where gay men have been executed on sodomy charges, while Egypt has prosecuted gay and lesbian people and suppressed outward expressions of gay pride, including rainbow flags.

The countries complained to FIFA in December about the "Pride Match" and have asked that the celebrations be canceled.

FIFA treats the rainbow flag as a statement of human rights and will allow fans to wave it inside the stadium, according to Hana Tadesse, a spokesperson for Seattle's World Cup organizing committee.

It was just a coincidence that the city's "Pride Match" ended up as a high-stakes matchup between Iran and Egypt –*AI*

When asked Thursday about the pride celebration, Egypt coach Hossam Hassan said the team was focused on soccer.

"We are concerned with football on the pitch," he said in Arabic. "We respect fair play and rules for everybody to abide by."

Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei made similar remarks during a news conference Thursday when asked about what will happen at Lumen Field.

"We are only going to speak about football, what a beautiful game it is, and how enjoyable it's going to be," Ghalenoei said in response to a reporter's question in Farsi. "As for things that are forbidden in our religion and do not exist, we do not want to talk about them. We only talk about the match, football and the beauty of the game."

The match on Friday coincides with Seattle's annual celebration of the LGBTQ+ community and Pride watch parties are planned in some neighborhoods. Over the weekend, the city will hold its popular Pride parade.

Ilona Lohrey, president and CEO of the Greater Seattle Business Association, an LGBTQ+ chamber of commerce, described Seattle as one of the most inclusive cities in the country.

"I think it gives us an opportunity to showcase who we are as a city, who we are as a people and how diversity makes us stronger," Lohrey said in an interview. —*PTI*

File photo of Seattle's pride parade –*AI*

Eggs out, politics in: WB school meal rekindles debate on identity

The battle over West Bengal's political future may have ended, but one of the assembly poll campaign's most emotive themes has resurfaced in school kitchens.

The BJP government's decision to engage ISKCON to provide cooked mid-day meals in schools under the Kolkata Municipal Corporation area and replace eggs with vegetarian alternatives has reopened a wider debate over nutrition, culture and identity.

The move revived memories of the poll-season clash when fish became a political symbol, and the TMC accused the BJP of seeking to impose a vegetarian cultural template on West Bengal.

Presenting the state's first budget after the BJP's victory in the assembly polls, Finance Minister Swapan Dasgupta announced that the material cost for primary school midday meals would be increased from Rs 6.78 to Rs 10 per student and that ISKCON would be entrusted with supplying cooked meals under a pilot project in the KMC area.

The enhanced allocation was welcomed across the political spectrum. But the spotlight shifted to one change: eggs, considered the most popular item in Bengal's school meal programme, would disappear from the plate.

Students would be served protein-rich vegetarian alternatives such as paneer, rajma, soya products, pulses and milk-based items.

The move has immediately acquired political overtones in a state where food habits frequently intersect with electoral narratives.

During the assembly election campaign, the then ruling TMC repeatedly accused the BJP of seeking to reshape Bengal's food culture and portrayed fish consumption as an integral part of Bengali identity.

BJP leaders countered those charges by publicly eating fish and dismissing the allegations that they intended to alter local dietary practices.

The latest decision has allowed the opposition to revive that argument.

Leader of the Opposition and rebel TMC leader Ritabrata Banerjee said, "For generations, Bengali children have grown up consuming animal protein as part of their regular diet. Nutrition schemes should reflect local food culture and not move away from it."

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien linked the decision to a broader ideological agenda, accusing the BJP government of "imposing vegetarianism" through a welfare programme.

Teachers say attendance often improves on egg-serving days, particularly among children from economically weaker families –*PTI*

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari defended the decision in the assembly, saying the objective was to ensure quality and hygienic food for children."Nobody is imposing anyone's religious beliefs on anyone else. The focus is on providing good food to students," he said.

School Education Minister Dipak Burman argued that vegetarian diets are fully capable of meeting nutritional requirements. "Millions of people across the world live healthy lives on vegetarian food. Nutrition should be judged by scientific standards, not by whether a meal contains eggs," he said.

Yet some of the strongest reactions have come from classrooms. Teachers say attendance often improves on egg-serving days, particularly among children from economically weaker families.

A Kolkata school headmaster said children often looked forward to the weekly egg meal.

"We welcome the increase in spending and any effort to improve food quality. But eggs have a special appeal among students. Whether alternatives generate the same enthusiasm remains to be seen," he said.

Another teacher questioned whether foods such as rajma and soya chunks would be readily accepted by children accustomed to more familiar non-veg items like eggs.

Nutrition experts say the debate cannot be reduced to a simple vegetarian-versus-non-vegetarian argument.

A senior clinical nutritionist said eggs remain one of the most affordable sources of complete protein because they contain all essential amino acids required for growth and development.

"Vegetarian alternatives can certainly provide adequate nutrition, but menu planning has to be rigorous and implementation consistent. The question is not whether vegetarian food works; it is whether the nutritional replacement is properly designed," the expert said.

Another nutrition specialist noted that soya products can match or exceed eggs in protein content, while paneer and pulses can contribute significantly.

The debate is particularly sensitive in Bengal, where concerns over child nutrition remain significant and school meals function as an important social safety net.

ISKCON insists that the controversy is misplaced.

Radharamn Das, vice-president and spokesperson of ISKCON Kolkata, said the organisation already serves meals to around 12 lakh students across several states and follows nutrition norms prescribed by governments.

"There is a misconception that nutrition depends only on eggs. Children can receive the required protein and nutrients through pulses, soya products, dairy items and vegetables. The focus should be on nutritional outcomes," he said.

Das said menus for Bengal would be prepared keeping local preferences in mind and in consultation with nutrition experts.

"We follow the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition that originated in Bengal. It is incorrect to suggest that vegetarian food is alien to Bengali culture," he added.

Yet the controversy illustrates how food in Bengal rarely remains just about food. What began as an administrative decision on school meals has evolved into a larger argument over nutrition, culture, welfare and identity.

As the government prepares to roll out the pilot project, the success or failure of the initiative may depend not only on protein charts and budget allocations but also on whether children embrace what appears on their plates.

For now, eggs may be off the menu. But the politics surrounding them has only begun to simmer. —*PTI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

If Watergate happened tomorrow, it would be like a 12-hour news story. The idea that it would have taken down a presidency is crazy

—JD VANCE,

US Vice President. Former president Richard Nixon resigned after the Watergate scandal, where journalists discovered that the government was tapping phones

Venezuelans dig up rubble to search for loved ones

Powercuts slow rescue ops, as airports remain shut

LA GUAIRA, 26 JUNE

In cities across northern Venezuela, neighbours helped each other dig through rubble to search for loved ones on Thursday after back-to-back earthquakes that officials say killed more than 500 people and left at least 5,000 injured.

The injured were pulled out covered in dust and blood, among them children and animals. Families posted missing-person flyers with photos of loved ones while others shared handwritten lists of names as they searched. Venezuelans abroad struggled to make contact with relatives due to interrupted phone service in the country.

Mother of three Dayana Delgado asked where the heavy machinery was that government officials had promised and said residents were the ones digging through crumpled buildings.

"I want to know where my child is, if he's trapped or in a shelter," she said of her missing 8-year-old son.

One mother sobbed and collapsed in grief as the bodies of her 3- and 10-year-old children were wrapped in blankets and carried away. Others screamed the names of the missing. Some stood in silent shock.

In La Guaira, Cristian Carreño stared at his charred apartment building tilting precariously to one side.

"I lost everything," he said. "There are people still inside, I imagine, that couldn't get out. It's incredibly devastating."

Retired schoolteacher Juan Alberto Mendano climbed through wreckage in La Guaira and past a dead body when he spotted a woman who was trapped and signalling with her hand for help. "May God rescue her as quickly as possible When we heard the scream, there was nothing we could do."

Media reports have shared notable moments of hope among the destruction, including a young man brought out on a stretcher to the applause of onlookers as his tearful mother said, "Leandro, I love you."

Venezuelan public television broadcast video of a girl covered in dust as she emerged from rubble with the help of rescuers. Caracas metropolitan rescue team head José Luis Núñez said she was found in a 10-story building in La Guaira that collapsed and flattened "like a pancake." —*PTI*

A woman walks past a building damaged during an earthquake in La Guaira, Venezuela —*PTI*

Police carry a body from a building that collapsed after earthquakes struck La Guaira; A vehicle is crushed at a building in the city, which was the worst hit after the twin earthquakes —*PTI*

Heavy rain pounds Japan as tropical storms approach

TOKYO, 26 JUNE

Heavy rainfall caused flooding in parts of western Japan on Friday, with two tropical storms, Mekkhala and Higos, approaching. The Japan Meteorological Agency reported Mekkhala off Japan's southern island of Amami heading northeast, while Higos was nearby. Both storms are expected to reach the Tokyo region on Saturday with heavy rain. A man was injured after falling into a waterway in Nara, and footage showed the Kamo River swollen. Flood alerts were issued in Kyoto, Osaka, and other areas. —*PTI*

Kim calls for 'destructive' military posture

SINGAPORE, 26 JUNE

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed weapons tests and called for a "deadly and destructive offensive posture" to be strengthened, as South Korea announced plans to significantly enhance its drone warfare capabilities. Kim's tests evaluated a "special mission" warhead aimed at inflicting damage on major targets, including US military bases in South Korea. South Korea's Defence Minister Ahn Gyu-back confirmed plans to develop long-range exploding drones and train 500,000 troops as "drone warriors".. .—*PTI*

Weinstein's rape charge dropped as accuser withdraws

NEW YORK, 26 JUNE

Harvey Weinstein will not face a fourth trial on a New York rape charge after prosecutors dropped the case on Thursday. The decision followed his accuser Jessica Mann's statement that she could no longer endure testifying. Mann, a hairstylist and actor, testified that Weinstein raped her in a Manhattan hotel in 2013, but she later said she had a consensual relationship with him. In a letter, Mann said she could "no longer endure going through this," and the case had "put me through more harm than good." —*PTI*

King Charles III to use Buckingham Palace as HQ

LONDON, 26 JUNE

Buckingham Palace will serve as King Charles III and Queen Camilla's official London headquarters, not as their residence, once refurbishments are completed next year. The King plans to live at Clarence House nearby, which has been their London home since 2005. The Palace will remain the ceremonial centre of royal life and a public heritage site. The 10-year renovation, costs around GBP 370 million.—*PTI*

US presence in Gulf a driver of insecurity: Iran

TEHRAN, 26 JUNE

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Friday condemned a joint statement issued by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), describing it as "interventionist, irresponsible and provocative," according to state-run Press TV.

The statement had reaffirmed "enduring American commitment" to Gulf countries, called for an open and free Strait of Hormuz, and said that any trade and investment with Iran would be "conditional and reversible," depending on Tehran's compliance with the Islamabad memorandum.

However, Iran said that that the US military footprint in the region remains a burden on local populations and a primary driver of insecurity. It said that the Gulf countries were complicit in the US-Israeli attacks on Iran as American military bases in the region were used for the military operations.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump repeated the claim that Iran's frozen assets will be used to buy American crops for Tehran, as its economy was struggling, adding that it was part of the interim agreement.

However, Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf dismissed notion on X.

"America falsely claims our unfrozen assets will buy their agriculture," he stated. "The only crop we're harvesting is what you planted: decades of mistrust. It's organic, abundant, and homegrown. But apparently the US only exports GMO (genetically modified organism) soybeans, broken promises, and trash talks."

—*Salar News*

Iraq is considering leaving OPEC, following the UAE's steps. Baghdad is the 2nd largest oil producer in the Saudi-dominated cartel and demands that its quota be hiked, sources told Reuters.

Destroyed buildings in a village in southern Lebanon as seen from northern Israel, Friday —*PTI*

Every dollar that reaches Iran is a dollar that could find its way to Hezbollah, to Hamas, to the Houthis and to other terror proxies. We must not settle for what we've achieved so far

—Israel Katz, Israeli Defence Minister

ITALIAN BASES NOT USED TO STRIKE IRAN: FM

ROME, 26 JUNE

Italy's Foreign Affairs Minister Antonio Tajani on Friday dialled Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and said that Italy has never taken part in any military initiative and has never authorised the use of bases for war actions against Iran.

The comments come after the NATO Secretary Mark Rutte told US President Donald Trump that at least 500 planes took off from Italy and Iran demanded accountability. Rutte had claimed that NATO and European allies facilitated thousands of American jets during its military operations against Iran, even as Trump continued to belittle the alliance.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni also pushed back against Rutte's assertions.

"If we had participated in the conflict with Iran, it would be difficult to explain the repeated disappointment expressed by the American President," she said. "We respected our commitments by making our bases available only for logistical and technical activities, not for combat operations." —*Agencies*

Iran warns against advancing Israeli warplanes

TEHRAN, 26 JUNE

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps warned that the presence of Israeli military aircraft in the airspace of neighbouring countries is a direct threat.

Without naming in which countries the aircrafts were seen, the IRGC stated: "We declare that if America is unable to contain and control the Zionist regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran will not tolerate any threat against it and considers it its right to respond to these dangerous actions." —*ANI*

Israel must leave Lebanon: Hezbollah

BEIRUT, 26 JUNE

Hezbollah Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem has declared that Israel has "no option" but to fully withdraw from all Lebanese territory.

"They sought to destroy us, but they suffered a crushing defeat," Qassem said in Beirut on Thursday. "We have shattered the Israeli-American project and entered a new phase."

"Israel sought to occupy Lebanon as part of its 'Greater Israel' project, but the resistance emerged in response to its aggression and occupation," he added.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, had a different plan.

"We dominate southern Lebanon from the summit of the Beaufort (castle)," he said. "We will remain in the security zone in southern Lebanon for as long as necessary. We are not going to withdraw from it."

Israeli forces dropped leaflets over the southern Lebanese town of Mansouri on Friday ordering residents to leave, the first such order issued since a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah took effect. —*Salar News*

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman with Chinese President Xi Jinping, in Beijing on Friday —*BANGLADESH PMO*

China to expand Belt and Road with B'desh: Xi

BEIJING, 26 JUNE

Beijing is ready to expand its flagship Belt and Road initiative with Dhaka, China President Xi Jinping told Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Friday during a bilateral meeting.

On the final day of his five-day visit, Rahman met Xi at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Xi told Rahman that China supports Bangladesh's new government.

Xi said China is willing to map out key cooperation with Bangladesh and tap into the potential for collaboration in green and low-carbon development, digital economy, information technology, artificial intelligence and other fields.

The BRI focuses on infrastructure and has become a key pillar of China's global outreach.

CHINA-MYANMAR-B'DESH CORRIDOR

Rahman and Xi also discussed setting up an economic corridor linking Bangladesh to China via Myanmar to boost trade.

CHITTAGONG PORT

They explored Chinese support for upgrading Bangladesh's Chittagong and Mongla ports. Chittagong handles about 90 per cent of the country's import-export trade.

Mandarin also is being prioritised as Bangladesh's third language. —*Salar News*

Ukraine launches massive drone waves at Russia

KYIV, 26 JUNE

Ukraine launched one of its heaviest drone attacks of the war overnight, with Russia claiming its air defences intercepted 660 drones over 12 regions, occupied Crimea, the Black Sea and the Azov Sea on Friday.

It appeared to be one of the largest drone assaults on Russia and Crimea since the invasion began. The previous biggest Ukrainian attack over the past year involved 556 drones on May 17.

Russia reported limited damage, saying a woman was injured near Moscow and a power line near Novomoskovsk was hit. Independent Russian media, however, claimed a chemical plant and a hydroelectric facility in Novomoskovsk were damaged. Ukraine's Security Service said it struck Russian navy ships and air defence radar systems in Kerch, Crimea.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had ordered a "40-day influence operation" to "compel Russia to end the war".

Meanwhile, Russia's drone attacks killed at least two people in Ukraine's Kharkiv region. Ukraine said it intercepted 174 of 189 Russian drones, but four of seven Iskander-M ballistic missiles got through. —*PTI*

Rescue workers put out a fire at a building destroyed after a Russian strike on Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine —*PTI*

VICTORY FOR DEPORTATIONS

US govt hails SC immigration rulings

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

The Trump administration on Thursday hailed a series of US Supreme Court immigration rulings as a major victory, claiming the decisions strengthen border enforcement, uphold the temporary nature of humanitarian protections and provide officials with greater authority to implement the President's immigration agenda.

The court cleared the way for the administration to revive the "metering" policy, allowing border officials to limit the number of migrants seeking asylum at US-Mexico ports of entry. In a 6-3 ruling, the court held that migrants have not "arrived" in the US until they physically enter the country, overturning lower court orders that had blocked

the practice.

In another 6-3 decision, the court allowed the administration to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for about 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians, potentially allowing them to be deported.

Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin called the rulings victories for enforcing immigration laws, while Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said they showed that TPS was "temporary". —*ANI*

Apple hikes MacBook, iPad prices by up to 42%

AI demand is tightening memory chip supply globaly

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Driven by rising memory chip costs, Apple has increased the global starting prices of MacBook and iPad models by 20 to 42 per cent compared to their original launch prices.

The new price list on Apple India's website shows that the company has increased the price of the MacBook Pro built on the M5 series chip by about 20 per cent.

The price of the 14-inch MacBook Pro with the M5 Pro chip has been increased to Rs 2,99,900 per unit from the launch price of Rs 2,49,900 per unit.

The price of the iPad Air has risen sharply. The base 13-inch model now costs Rs 1,19,900, up 41.22 per cent from Rs 84,900.

MacBook Neo, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, iPad Air, and iPad Pro Wi-Fi follow the biggest change in the cost structure –*AI*

Counterpoint Research Co-founder and VP for Research, Neil Shah, said Apple's price hikes for the MacBook Neo, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, iPad Air, and iPad Pro Wi-Fi follow the biggest change in the cost structure of the consumer and enterprise PC and tablet market, being shaped by the rising semiconductor chip pricing from memory to processors.

Price increases for consumer electronics are already widespread across the industry, with many products rising by 40 per cent or more.

Memory companies have been allocating an increasing share of their production to AI data centres, leaving the consumer electronics segment with constrained availability and rising costs.

Memory suppliers are reporting margins at historic highs; memory chip leader Micron reported 86 per cent gross margins, up from 15 per cent in just the past year.

"Apple, long regarded as the industry's benchmark for supply chain resilience, has begun passing higher component costs on to consumers. That is a strong signal that pricing pressures have reached a level that even the most sophisticated absorption strategies cannot fully offset," CyberMedia Research, VP - Industry Research Group, Prabhu Ram said.

"This could affect overall demand for Apple products in the coming months. However, it could also work in Apple's favour — customers due for an upgrade who cannot delay their purchase may opt for a more premium device rather than compromise on configuration. The market could shift upward as users look to maximise value for money," Shah said. —*ANI*

FOR BOND MARKET LIQUIDITY

RBI caps short-selling in G-secs at 2% or ₹500 cr

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday proposed new rules for short-selling in government securities (G-secs).

For liquid government securities, short positions will be capped at 2 per cent of the outstanding stock of the government security, or Rs 500 crore, whichever is higher.

For other eligible securities, the limit is 1 per cent of outstanding bonds or Rs 250 crore, whichever is higher. Treasury Bills have been excluded from the provisions.

In the draft, the central bank has allowed banks and primary dealers to acquire a larger share of government bond auctions than other investors.

The former can bid for up to 25 per cent of the notified amount, while the latter are capped at 10 per cent.

The central bank has also finetuned the rules for engagement with the secondary market and "when-issued" (WI) transactions.

It has clarified that WI trades "may commence after the issue/re-issue of the eligible Government security is notified and shall cease at the close of trading on the date of auction."

The draft has been issued amidst a push to strengthen monetary policy transmission through a more active term money market and better-linked yield structures.

The RBI has allowed regulated entities to set guidelines within board-approved limits, staying within exposure norms.

The central bank has invited comments from banks, investors and other market participants on both of the draft directions before 17 July, 2026. — *SalarNews*

- The Reserve Bank of India has allowed banks and primary dealers to acquire a larger share of government bond auctions than other investors. Under the revised norms, the former can bid for up to 25% of the notified amount, while other eligible participants are capped at 10%.

Air India may restore more flight schedules: Sources

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Air India is considering restoring flight schedules that were reduced, sources said.

CEO **Campbell Wilson** told employees that the easing of the West Asia conflict has created a more stable operating environment, increasing available airspace and moderating fuel prices.

Wilson noted that while there is no guarantee the situation will not escalate again, the airline may be able to reverse recent schedule cuts if the current trend continues.

He expressed hope among staff that these improvements would materialise soon.

On fleet and service quality, Wilson said customer feedback for the airline's retrofitted Boeing 787 fleet has been highly positive.

One Boeing 787-8 is currently en route to California for retrofitting, and approximately eight new or retrofitted widebody aircraft are expected to join service this year. A new Boeing 787-9 is expected to arrive in India this weekend.

The airline also reported record operational performance in June, with overall on-time performance (OTP) at 86 per cent and domestic OTP at a record 90 per cent. —*ANI*

AUTOMATES WORK

'India IT boasts $10-12B revenue from AI'

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

India's technology services industry already generates an estimated USD 10–12 billion in revenue from artificial intelligence, with nearly a quarter of companies successfully moving AI projects into production, according to Nasscom.

Dismissing concerns that the rise of AI could diminish the relevance of traditional IT services, industry leaders at the Nasscom US CEO Forum in New York City said that the sector remains central to global enterprise transformation in the AI era.

"Nearly 25 per cent of technology services companies have moved AI experiments into production. The industry is generating an estimated USD 10 to 12 billion in AI services revenue, with more than 2 million professionals skilled in AI and 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 trained in advanced AI capabilities. Around 85 per cent of technology service providers now have agentic AI platforms," Nasscom said.

India's technology services industry already generates an estimated USD 10–12 billion –*x*

Nasscom projected that Agentic AI will unlock an additional USD 300–400 billion in addressable spend for technology services by 2030, spanning legacy modernisation, AI operations, cybersecurity, and governance.

While AI will compress standardised, repeatable work, it will expand demand for technology orchestration, data readiness, application modernisation, AI governance, cybersecurity, agent management, and industry-specific solutions. Business process services will shift from routine transaction execution to intelligence operations, with human effort moving towards supervision as AI automates routine work. —*PTI*

Ex- Meta executive sues company for 'silencing' her over memoir

NEW YORK, 26 JUNE

A former Meta executive has filed a lawsuit claiming the social media giant attempted to silence her after she published her memoir, 'Careless People'.

The lawsuit, submitted in a California federal court, alleges that Meta's private arbitration order, which bans her from discussing or promoting her book, is invalid. It also asserts that her severance agreement, which included a non-disparagement clause, was signed under duress.

Sarah Wynn-Williams, who was director of global public policy at Facebook (now Meta) from 2011 until her 2017 dismissal, describes her book as exposing "cruel and disturbing behaviour" by CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other executives. Meta claims Wynn-Williams breached her agreement and published inaccuracies.

The lawsuit states Meta seeks USD 50,000 in damages for each alleged violation, causing her financial strain. Wynn-Williams requests that the court lift the gag order and cancel her severance.

Meta claims her book is false and disparaging, accusing her of trying to sell books through legal means and surveilling her at public appearances. The lawsuit also details Meta's efforts to prevent her from criticising the company at events. —*PTI*

Anti-dumping duty on electric steel could hurt grid expansion: GTRI

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Any move to impose an anti-dumping duty on cold-rolled grain-oriented electrical steel (CRGO), which accounts for nearly 90 per cent of India's imports to meet domestic requirements, could increase transformer manufacturing costs and slow the country's power grid expansion, think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said on Friday.

The commerce ministry's arm, Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), has initiated an anti-dumping probe against imports of CRGO and amorphous metals from China, Japan, Korea and Russia, following a complaint by JSW JFE Electrical Steel Nashik Pvt Ltd.

Annual CRGO consumption is estimated at 4,00,000-4,50,000 tonnes, while domestic production is only 40,000-50,000 tonnes.

Nearly 90 per cent of India's requirements are imported, mainly from China, Japan, South Korea and Russia.

Anti-dumping duty imposed on cold-rolled grain-oriented electrical steel (CRGO) imported to India from China, Japan, Korea and Russia –*AI*

- The commerce ministry's arm, Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), has initiated an anti-dumping probe against imports of CRGO and amorphous metals from China, Japan.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said that with the domestic output meeting less than one-tenth of the country's demand, higher duties could raise prices without materially reducing import dependence, potentially slowing investments in transmission infrastructure, renewable-energy integration and electricity distribution. —*PTI*

FOREX RESERVES RECOVER BY $963M TO $672B: RBI

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

India's forex reserves increased by USD 963 million to USD 672.587 billion during the week ended 19 June, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped by USD 9.985 billion to USD 671.625 billion.

For the week ended 19 June , foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 3.072 billion to USD 541.217 billion, according to the RBI.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in foreign exchange reserves.

However, the value of gold reserves increased by USD 4.110 billion to USD 107.930 billion during the week, the RBI said.

India's reserve position with the IMF slipped USD 22 million to USD 4.793 billion in the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data.s. —*PTI*

India wary of Iran oil despite sanction waiver

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Indian refiners are unlikely to significantly increase purchases of Iranian crude despite a temporary easing of US sanctions, as uncertainty over the duration of the waiver, payment constraints, and existing supply commitments limit the scope for new buying, according to a market analyst.

The United States has provided a 60-day sanctions waiver that temporarily allows Iranian crude exports, but the short timeframe is unlikely to trigger a broad return of buyers beyond China, said Sumit Ritolia, who models refinery and oil markets at Kpler.

Indian refiners have already secured much of their crude requirements for the coming months, with procurement plans typically finalised two to three months in advance, Ritolia said.

Historically, India was a major buyer of Iranian crude, importing significant volumes of Iranian Light and Heavy grades due to strong refinery compatibility and favourable commercial terms.

Following sanctions tightening in 2018, imports ceased from May 2019, with volumes replaced by West Asia, US and other grades.

At its peak, Iranian crude accounted for 11.5 per cent of India's total imports. —*PTI*

AMAZON COMMITS $48B BY 2030

Tech giants commit over USD 90B investment in India

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Global corporations and institutional investors have announced more than USD 90 billion in fresh investment commitments to India in recent months, betting on the country's long-term economic growth despite rising geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions and an uncertain global outlook.

The planned investments span artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital infrastructure, manufacturing and industrial technology, reinforcing India's position as a key destination for global capital as companies diversify supply chains and expand in high-growth markets, sources said.

Among the biggest commitments, Amazon on Thursday said it would raise its total investment commitment in India to USD 48 billion by 2030, following a meeting between Chief Executive Andy Jassy and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The investments will support the company's expansion in cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence and digital services.

Earlier this month, Australian data centre operator AirTrunk announced plans to invest USD 30 billion to build 5 gigawatts of data centre capacity in India by 2030, one of the country's largest digital infrastructure investments to date.

French building materials company Saint-Gobain said on June 18 it would invest an additional 1 billion euros (USD 1.15 billion) in India over the next five years, citing the country as one of its fastest-growing global markets.

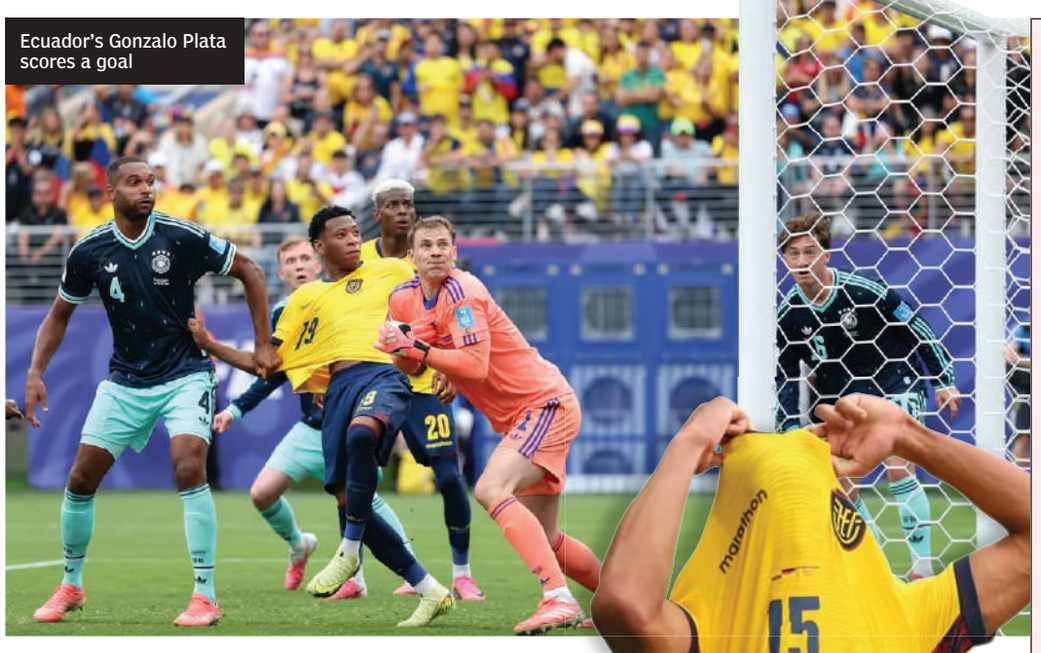
The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) also committed up to Rs 7,000 crore alongside CtrlS Datacenters to expand hyperscale data centre capacity, while industrial technology company ABB announced a USD 75 million investment in March to expand its manufacturing and research footprint in India.

Google in February unveiled a five-year USD 15 billion plan to expand AI infrastructure in India, including data centres, subsea connectivity, cloud capacity and workforce skilling initiatives.

The announcements come as multinational companies navigate heightened geopolitical risks, including conflict in West Asia, shifting trade policies and slowing growth in several major economies, while increasingly viewing India as a strategic market for manufacturing, technology and digital infrastructure.

Sources said the latest investment commitments underscore growing confidence among global boardrooms in India's long-term growth prospects, supported by its large domestic market, expanding digital economy, improving infrastructure and policy push to attract foreign investment. —*PTI*

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and announced plans to invest $48 billion in India between 2026 and 2030 –*PTI*


Ecuador's Gonzalo Plata scores a goal

Ecuador advance to KNOCKOUT ROUNDS, beat Germany 2-1

EAST RUTHERFORD, 26 JUNE

Gonzalo Plata poked the ball past Manuel Neuer in the 77th minute, and Ecuador advanced to the knockout stage of the World Cup by rallying for a 2-1 win over Germany on Thursday.

Germany, which clinched first place in Group E with victories in its first two games, went ahead on Leroy Sané's second-minute goal. Nilson Angulo scored Ecuador's first goal of the tournament in the ninth minute.

Plata, who took a kick to the head when Germany scored its early goal, keyed Ecuador's great escape after Pedro Vite's corner kick was nodded on by Kevin Rodríguez. Neuer, the 40-year-old Germany goalkeeper who came out of international retirement for the World Cup, was about to grasp the ball when Plata raised his left foot and with a toe put the ball into the net.

Ecuador coach Sebastián Beccacece ran to the stands to celebrate.

Ecuador finished third in the group with four points and advanced past the group stage for the second time, the first since a round of 16 game in 2006.

Germany's winning streak was stopped at 11 games, one shy of the team record set in 1979-80. The four-time champions will play their round of 32 game Monday at Foxborough, Massachusetts, most likely against Paraguay, Australia or Sweden.

A crowd of 80,663 at MetLife Stadium that was mostly in Ecuador's yellow boosted attendance to a record 3,587,539 in the 56th game of the expanded tournament, one more than the 52 matches for the 1994 tournament in the US. —*PTI*

Turkey beats US 3-2 with last-gasp goal against US

INGLEWOOD, 26 JUNE

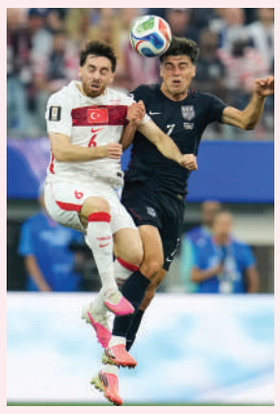
Kaan Ayhan scored on the final kick of the match, and Turkey beat the United States 3-2 on Thursday night for its only win of the World Cup.

Auston Trusty scored in the third minute and Sebastian Berhalter got a tying goal early in the second half for the Americans, who had already won Group D with victories over Paraguay and Australia. Coach Mauricio Pochettino's team will meet Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Round of 32 on Wednesday.

Pochettino fielded nine new starters for this low-stakes game, but Christian Pulisic entered in the 58th minute. He hadn't played since the first half of the Americans' opener due to a calf injury.

Arda Güler and Orkun Kokçu scored in the first half of a resilient performance by Turkey, which had already been eliminated after losing its first two matches despite largely dominating both statistically.

Turkey improbably won in the eighth minute of stoppage time when Can Uzun got the ball in space on the back post and pushed it past sprawling goalkeeper Matt Turner to Ayhan, who slid to knock it home. —*PTI*



Ivory Coast enters knockout round after beating Curacao

PHILADELPHIA, 26 JUNE

Ivory Coast got goals from Nicolas Pépé in each half and advanced to the World Cup knockout round for the first time in the West African team's history with a 2-0 victory over Curaçao on Thursday.

Les Éléphants crashed the party and made it out of their group for the first time in four World Cup appearances.

Ivory Coast beat Ecuador 1-0 in its tournament opener - at the same Philadelphia stadium as Thursday's game -- and lost to Germany in its Group E second game. Ivory Coast will play against either France or Norway, whichever is the runner-up in Group I on 30 June.

Curaçao needed to win and instead failed to become the smallest nation to qualify for the knockout stages.

Pépé, who plays for the Spanish club Villarreal, scored in the seventh minute and the lead held the rest of the game.

Les Éléphants found their adoptive fans among the crowd of 68,324 -- about 40 per cent of the population of Curaçao -- at the home of the NFL's Eagles. The fans in Ivory Coast orange went wild when Pépé scored again in the 64th minute to seal the win. He was subbed out three minutes later to earn just a bit more rest for the 30 June game that will serve as their biggest. —*PTI*

Ivory Coast coach slams 'racist' comments

PHILADELPHIA, 26 JUNE

Ivory Coast coach Emerse Faé slammed what he considered were racist comments made about his team by former Germany player Bastian Schweinsteiger.

Schweinsteiger made the comments on German broadcaster ARD before Germany played Ivory Coast last weekend, when he spoke about what the German players could expect from their opponents.

"A bit African football, a bit unorthodox, a bit wild, a bit perhaps also not so conditioned by tactics. We have to be prepared for it to be unpredictable," Schweinsteiger said.

Faé led Ivory Coast into the World Cup knockout round for the first time in national team history with a 2-0 win over Curaçao on Thursday. —*PTI*

Japan, Sweden advance to knockout

ARLINGTON, 26 JUNE

Daizen Maeda gave Japan the lead and Anthony Elanga took it away six minutes later, helping Sweden to a 1-1 draw on Thursday night that sent both teams to the knockout round of the World Cup.

Elanga's impressive left-footed strike from just outside the right corner of the box in the 62nd minute was his second goal of this year's tournament. Elanga has scored only three goals in 49 games for Newcastle, but zero in 32 Premier League matches.

Six minutes earlier, Maeda settled a nifty pass from Ritsu Doan with his left foot in the penalty area and beat Jacob Widell Zetterstrom with his right foot.

It was Japan's seventh goal of the tournament, the country's most for an entire World Cup. That topped the six the Japanese scored while reaching the round of 16 in Russia eight years ago.

Japan is advancing out of the group stage for the third consecutive World Cup and fifth time in seven tries since first reaching the round of 16 as co-hosts in 2002. The Japanese team finished second in Group F behind the Netherlands and will play Brazil in Houston on Monday. —*PTI*

Sweden's Alexander Bernhardsson (21) and Japan's Ao Tanaka (7) battle for the ball —*PTI*

Against odds at World Cup, New Zealand a win away from its first knockout berth

VANCOUVER, 26 JUNE

There are several World Cup teams ranked higher than New Zealand entering their final group-stage matches without any hope of advancing to the Round of 32.

"That's not us," New Zealand coach Darren Bazeley said on Thursday ahead of his team's match against Belgium on Friday. "We're now in a game where we win, we go through."

That scenario seemed unthinkable when the All Whites, among the lowest-ranked teams in the this year's World Cup, were drawn into Group G with Belgium, Egypt and Iran. But thanks to the expanded 48-team format and a group that has veered off script, New Zealand is one win away from advancing out of the group stage for the first time. "It never works out like you expect it to," Bazeley said. "Football doesn't."

A win against Belgium could push New Zealand into second place in Group G -- and therefore the knockout rounds -- if Egypt and Iran play to a draw in a match that will be played simultaneously on Friday.

Anything less than a win for New Zealand against Belgium would strip the All Whites of a shot at advancing out of the group stage.

"It's pretty black and white for us now, which is quite a nice thing," Bazeley said.

In New Zealand's last World Cup appearance in 2010, the All Whites played to a draw in all of its group-stage matches. They were the only team to go undefeated at that World Cup to not advance to the knockout rounds.

Belgium has not missed a World Cup tournament during New Zealand's 16-year absence, finishing third overall in 2018.

"The goal was to get out of the group," Bazeley said. "That's still the goal. We still believe that's possible and that we've created this opportunity." —*PTI*

FRANCE VS NORWAY

Mbappé & Haaland take centre stage

DALLAS, 26 JUNE

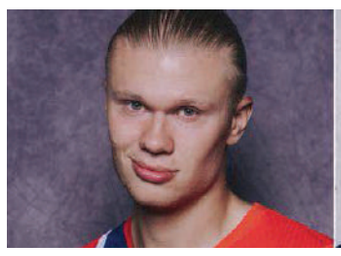
Shortly after his team beat Senegal, Norway star Erling Haaland said he didn't care all that much about its next game against France.

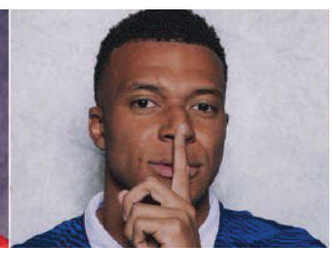
The rest of the soccer world sure does.

One of the marquee matchups of the World Cup takes place in Foxborough, Massachusetts, on Friday, when Haaland and the Norwegians face France and Kylian Mbappé.

Mbappé, one of the world's best strikers, has scored four goals in two games to push his World Cup total to 16, two behind Lionel Messi's record.

Haaland has put on a show in his first World Cup, scoring twice each in wins over Senegal and Iraq.





This is a matchup even casual soccer fans won't want to miss.

Also on Friday, Spain can clinch Group H against Uruguay, which likely needs a win to keep its knockout-stage hopes alive. Belgium faces New Zealand in what is likely a must-win for both sides.

The winner of Group G will likely be decided when Egypt meets Iran in Seattle.

Senegal also faces Iraq in a game both sides need to win to have a shot at advancing to the knockout stage as a third-place team.

Cape Verde has made quite an impression its first World Cup, is on the knockout stage berth.

The island nation off the western coast of Africa pulled off one of the World Cup's biggest surprises by playing pre-tournament favorite Spain to a scoreless draw in its opener. Cape Verde followed that up by scoring its first goals of the World Cup in a 2-2 tie against Uruguay.

The Egypt-Iran match will likely determine the winner of Group G, will be played in the backdrop of the LBGTQ+ Prime March as the match day will coincide with the city's annual Pride March in Seattle.

Iran also has faced multiple hurdles playing in the United States in this World Cup due to the war in the Middle East. The Iranians had been forced to travel only on game days from their base camp in Tijuana, Mexico, but US officials eased restrictions to allow the team to travel two days before the match against Egypt. —*PTI*

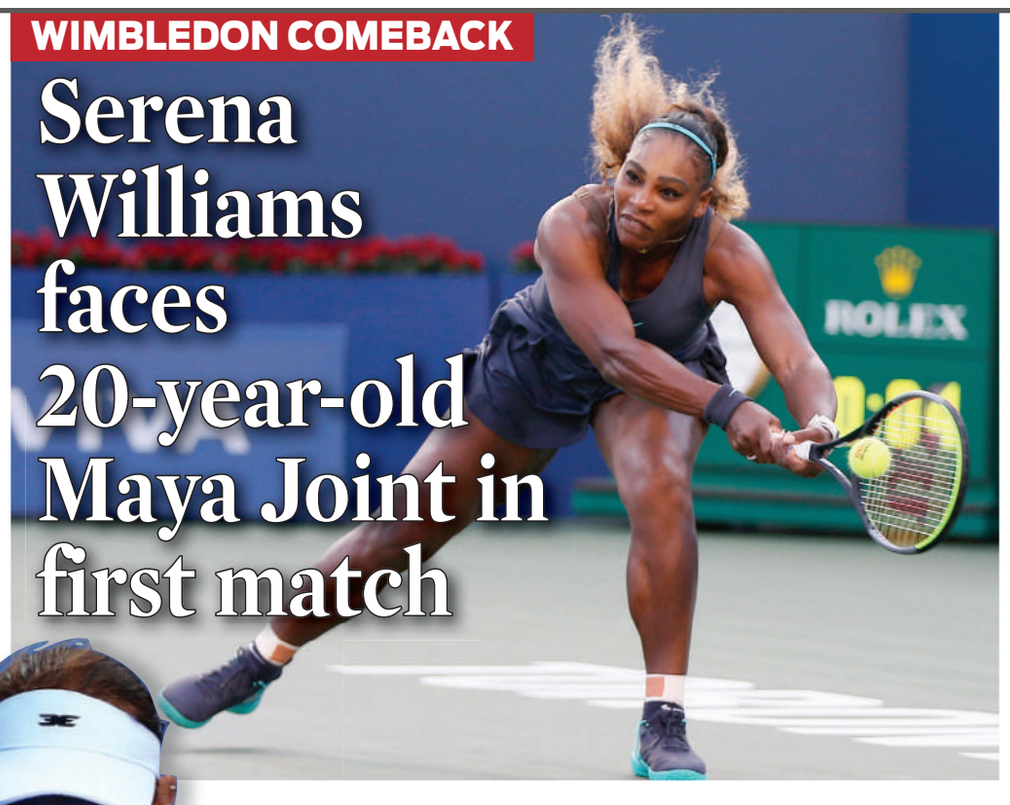
India lose on penalties to England in FIH

LONDON, 26 JUNE

The Indian men's hockey team went down 1-4 to England in a penalty shootout after the two teams were locked 2-2 in regulation time of their FIH Pro League match here. At the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre on Thursday night, Dilpreet Singh (10th minute and 58th minute) scored an impressive brace for India while David Goodfield (29th minute) and Nicholas Bandurak (56th minute) were on the scoresheet for England. Later in the shootout, Thomas Sorsby, James Albery and captain Zachary Wallace converted their attempts in the shootout for the hosts, besides one attempt that led to a penalty stroke, which was also scored off by Wallace. Captain Harmanpreet Singh was India's lone scorer in the shootout. India will next face Pakistan late on Friday night. —*PTI*

WIMBLEDON COMEBACK

Serena Williams faces 20-year-old Maya Joint in first match



LONDON, 26 JUNE:

Serena Williams will face an opponent less than half her age when she plays 20-year-old Maya Joint of Australia in the first round at Wimbledon for her first singles match in nearly four years.

The seven-time Wimbledon singles champion, who is 44, accepted a wild-card entry to the grass-court Grand Slam, where she'll also compete in doubles with her older sister Venus, who turned 46 last week.

It's all part of a tennis comeback that started with two doubles warmup matches but kicked into high gear on Sunday when the All England Club announced Serena would play singles.

Joint is ranked No. 53 and made her Wimbledon debut last year, losing in the first round to Liudmila Samsonova 6-3, 6-2.

Williams hasn't played a singles match since a third-round loss to Ajla Tomljanovic at the 2022 US Open. At the time, she said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared she was "evolving" away from tennis. Her second daughter was born in 2023.

If Williams beats Joint on Tuesday, she may face rising Filipino star Alexandra Eala, who is seeded 29th, in the second round. She could meet defending champion Iga Swiatek in the third round.

On the men's side, No. 1 Jannik Sinner will begin his Wimbledon title defense against Miomir Kecmanovic on Centre Court on Monday.

Novak Djokovic, a seven-time champion at the All England Club, is the No. 7 seed and will play Wu Yibing of China. Djokovic could meet third-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime in the quarterfinals.cTwo-time champion Carlos Alcaraz, who lost to Sinner in the 2025 final, will miss this year's tournament because of a wrist injury.

Wimbledon starts on Monday. —*PTI*

Captain's knock by De Silva rallies Lanka on Day 1 against WI

NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA), 26 JUNE

Captain Dhananjaya de Silva's 13th century rallied Sri Lanka after it twice lost two wickets in an over, guiding his team to 308 all out on Thursday, on the opening day of the first test against the West Indies.

De Silva shared partnerships of 68 for the fourth wicket with Dinesh Chandimal (54), and 99 for the sixth wicket with Sonal Dinusha (43) after Sri Lanka had been 42-3. The visiting skipper was finally out for 120 in the last session after adding a further 64 runs for the seventh wicket with Milan Rathnayake (27).

Sri Lanka was 272-7 when de Silva was out in the 65th over and it's innings ended seven overs later as Jayden Seales and Justin Greaves wrapped up the tail.

West Indies openers John Campbell and Brandon King had to see out a single over before stumps to finish the day on 0-0 in the opening game of the two-match series.

Greaves took 3-39, Alzarri Joseph and Shamar Joseph picked up two wickets each and Kemar Roach claimed 2-32 to edge closer to 300 test victims. He now has 296 at an average of 27.02.

They were all part of a pace-heavy lineup which encouraged the West Indies to bowl on winning the toss. The decision seemed a sound one when Alzarri Joseph removed Nishan Madushka and Kamindu Mendis in the 10th over.

The pitch favoured the quicks early but settled in the afternoon as de Silva built his century from 150 balls. Sri Lanka is playing its first test in a year since a 1-0 series win against Bangladesh.

West Indies also is playing its first test this year and searching for its first win in the World Test Championship after seven defeats in eight Tests. —*PTI*